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ABSTRACT

Findings of a longitudinal study that explored the impact of recent educational reforms in England on the nature of the relationship between headteachers and lay school governors are presented in this paper. Recent legislation, notably the 1986 Education Act (No. 2) and the 1988 Education Reform Act, have increased governors' and consumers' power and reduced the power of the "producers" of education. Governors are members of school governing bodies who have volunteered to work with headteachers in school administration. The study of two local education authorities--Northshire and Southshire--involved observations of meetings and governor training sessions, questionnaires administered to governors, interviews conducted with headteachers and chairs, and informal discussions with local education agency officers. Findings indicate that the governor/headteacher relationship is not a consensual one. Factors inhibiting the development of a partnership include the micropolitical nature of school governance; the emerging organizational cultures of governing bodies; the loose coupling of governing bodies to schools; the differences between heads and governors about power; the complex and ambiguous nature of reform legislation; and cultural factors, such as race, gender, and ethnicity. The question is raised whether community involvement should extend to nonprofessionals taking a key role in educational decision making and policy formation. (27 references) (LMI)

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Consumers and Education Professionals in the Organisation and Administration of Schools; Partnership or conflict?

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Introduction

'Interviewer: 'There's a view that governors need managing; what do you think about this?

Headteacher: I agree with it and I manage mine in two ways: first I try to get the people I want, eg the chair and the vice chair nominations are not left to chance ... to be a head you have to be a political animal ... I hope, however I manage not in a negative, manipulative way. Second I know and say what I want the school to do and I could argue this with the governors and I normally get my way - most governors want to support the head, there's no-one on the governing board who doesn't, well maybe one who's there on an ego trip'

Headteacher, Little Rivers Secondary School, Northshire, 1990.

Interviewer: Does the chair of governors have as much power to make decisions as the headteacher?

Mr ... (Chair of Governors): Let's put it this way - the changes which are to be brought about, it is difficult for the headteacher and the profession to accept - it's going to take a lot of time ... no-one's going to surrender their power easily and headteachers are no exception ... governors are not part of any establishment and there's no way at the moment governors can make a decision and enforce it'

Chair of governors, Birchdene Primary School, 1991.

In this paper we examine recent evidence from a longitudinal research project we have been conducting over the period 1989 to 1992, with a view to exploring some of the issues surrounding the ways in which lay people and education professionals work together in schools. Our study concerns the impact of recent educational reforms in England on the role of a particular group of education consumers, the term used by the new

right education ideology to describe parents, employers and lay school governors. The research is about school governing bodies, whose members have volunteered to work with headteachers and teachers in the organisation, administration and managing of state schools. We have made use of observation of meetings, questionnaires, interviews and documentary analysis in conducting our study. Here, we explore the nature of the relationship which is developing between schools and governing bodies, asking whether the nature of that relationship is primarily conflictual or consensual..

We suggest that school governing bodies are best viewed as micropolitical organizations (Ball 1987), which are loosely coupled (Weick 1988) to the schools that they govern and even more loosely coupled to Local Education Authorities (LEAs). Governing bodies as organisations, we argue, are beginning to display some cultural features of their own, as a result of the changes brought about in their composition and responsibilities by the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts. These cultural characteristics were not apparent in the major English study of governing bodies carried out prior to 1986 by Kogan et al (1984). The Kogan study posited four models of governing body, the mediating, the supporting, advisory and accountable. However, it argued that all of them were strongly shaped and influenced by both the values of their school and by the culture and political ethos of the LEA concerned. This research also suggested that while not always harmonious, the relationships between governing bodies and schools were not constantly conflict ridden.

However, we feel that, partly as a consequence of the greater degree of autonomy between schools and governors, brought about by new responsibilities such as the power to determine head and deputy head teacher pay and give final approval to budgets , conflict rather than

partnership is becoming a common feature of relationships between governors, headteachers and schools. This is despite the close and supportive rapport which we have found to exist between headteachers and chairs of governing bodies, both in our interviews with them and in observation of them at meetings. The nature of these relationships is not a guide to how the rest of the governing body, who may keep at a greater distance from the school, both physically and politically, regard and treat the school and its staff. We must be careful not to attribute too much influence to educational legislation. The tensions between education professionals and lay governors also appear to be mediated by factors to do with social class, ethnicity, gender and educational background but have probably been exacerbated by the shift to school based budgeting, which gives many onerous responsibilities to governing bodies without clearly specifying the limits of those powers. The boundary between education professionals and lay people, whether parents, employers or members of the community, is one which is territorially defended by teachers in many countries in the world; but the boundaries are constantly shifting. With a new focus on parents and employers as consumers in the education marketplace becoming commonplace in many Western countries, the ways in which these boundaries are negotiated and maintained, in the specific case under discussion, is of interest in many different societies.

School governors as consumers

To an American audience the term governor, even used in an education setting, probably has a very different meaning from that in common usage in England, with thoughts turning to powerful Governors of States. In England and Wales the concept of a governor (or manager as elementary school governors were known until 1980) is a rather less prestigious post and refers to someone who is a member of a mixed body

of education professionals and lay people, with the latter not generally expected to have educational expertise. On the basis of nomination or direct election, governors play an unrenumerated and voluntary role as members of the governing bodies of state maintained schools. There are approximately 300,000 school governors in England and Wales and their responsibilities are intended to be exercised corporately and collectively. The 1944 Act gave governing bodies rather unspecific responsibilities for overseeing the curriculum and the conduct of the school, though this has been more and more closely specified since then; significantly the 1944 Act also gave ultimate responsibility for schools to headteachers, something subsequent legislation has steadily eroded.

Those eligible to become governors include headteachers, who may opt not to become a governor if they wish, and the teaching staff of the school, parents of the school's registered pupils, Local Education Authority representatives and members of the local community, including business and industry. The 1986 Education Act (no 2) gave special emphasis to the importance of including business people amongst the co-options to governing bodies. All except headteachers serve a four year term of office, though most are eligible for renomination or re-election.

Recent legislation, notably the 1986 Education Act (No. 2) and the 1988 Education Reform Act, has greatly increased governors' and consumers' powers within education, whilst simultaneously attempting to reduce the powers of the 'producers' of education. The latter endeavours include restricting the powers of LEAs over schools by giving more budget autonomy to schools, and seeking to limit the powers of teachers and heads by passing many responsibilities to governors. This process has gone alongside much publicised moves by a Conservative government to create a internal competitive market amongst state

schools, in which parental consumers make choices of school for their children, and money for education follows the pupil (Flude and Hammer 1990). The introduction, after the 1988 Reform Act, of a National Curriculum and regular testing, are intended to enable parents to discover, through analysis of published test results for different schools, which establishment is best for their child or children.

The reforms thus attempt to drive a firm wedge between those who teach or otherwise produce education and those who 'consume' it. However, students rarely seem to be seen as consumers and the notional divide between producers and consumers is problematic, since neither category is watertight. Teachers may also be parents, pupils are not allowed on governing bodies unless they are aged 18 or over, consumer governors who draw up school budgets and development plans may be participating in the production of schooling and so on (Deem 1990). However, just as significant a change, so far as governors are concerned, is that a task which was once little more than a pleasant, and not very onerous, duty involving a once-a-term meeting plus occasional attendance at school functions like concerts, plays and sports days, has now become a demanding position involving complex responsibilities for personnel and finance.

The reform of school governing bodies project

The research on which the paper is based, is a project which began 1988 and is due to be completed early in 1993, and it has been organised in two stages. The pilot study involved fifteen governing bodies from two different Local Education Authorities (LEAs),for four terms from October 1988 until December 1990.. This stage was exploratory. We soon found that the research was yielding fascinating and rich data (Deem 1989, Deem 1990, Brehony and Deem 1990) and that the co-operation from the governing bodies concerned was sufficient to continue the project beyond

the intended four terms so from spring 1990,the second stage began, using ten of the fifteeen original governing bodies.

The two local authorities, Northshire and Southshire, were chosen for a number of reasons. As project directors, we already had some knowledge of them and this was invaluable in the pilot stage. The two LEAs provided us with significant comparisons. These included contrasting styles of Chief Education Officers, and different approaches to a variety of educational policies, including those affecting school governors. Whereas Northshire adopted a 'hands on' policy towards its governing bodies, providing clerking and standard agendas as well as extensive briefing papers on important issues, for all its' schools, in Southshire there was a 'hands off' approach and schools and governors were very much left to their own devices. Both LEAs offer training to their governors , obligatory under the 1986 Education Act. We do not claim that the LEAs are 'typical' of all LEAs in England and Wales; however we do feel that an in-depth, longitudinal study like ours offers the possibility of reaching a high level of understanding of the processes involved in governing schools and enables the testing of theoretical ideas and stances in ways not permitted by a snapshot representative survey.

We selected the case study governing bodies on the basis of several factors. Firstly, the schools cover a wide range of catchment areas, from white, affluent, middle class areas of towns to predominantly working class areas, and sectors of inner cities where there are substantial ethnic minority populations. Thus we found different social and political groupings amongst the case study bodies. Secondly we covered both primary and secondary schools. Thirdly, we tried to include governing bodies who worked in different ways (though we had to rely on information available about them in their pre autumn 988 form). National evidence on social composition of governing bodies

(Streatfield and Jefferies 1989, Keys and Fernandes 1990) suggests that in our sample we have slightly fewer women; in 1989 we had 33%, compared with 40% nationally, though suggested by Keys and Fernandes to have reached 53% by 1990. We have rather more ethnic minority governors, with 7% in our sample in 1989 as compared with 3% in 1989 and 2% in 1990 (Streatfield and Jefferies 1989, Keys and Fernandes 1990).

We have used a variety of methods to carry out the research; we believe that method triangulation is an important consideration in contentious areas of current educational policy. We have undertaken extensive observation of formal,informal and sub-committee meetings of governing bodies, which includes making very detailed, almost verbatim, notes on the proceedings, attended early governor training sessions, sent a questionnaire to governors in the summer of 1989 and conducted semi-structured interviews with heads, chairs and chairs of sub-groups during 1990 and 1991. We have also held informal discussions with relevant officers from the two LEAs concerned and have collected for analysis a huge amount of documentation from the governing bodies concerned. It is usual for only one researcher at a time to attend a governing body meeting but we have tried to ensure that at some point, all of the bodies have been observed by more than one researcher.

Theoretical underpinnings

The theoretical approach which we favour, and which our data has continued to provide support for, is one which, following Stephen Ball (1987) sees governing bodies as organisations which are 'arenas of struggle, ...riven with actual or potential conflict between members; ... poorly co-ordinated: ... ideologically diverse'.(Ball 1987, p.19) Of course this doesn't mean that schools and governing bodies are thereby embroiled in perpetual strife and struggle. Rather, we suggest that

within governing bodies there are many private ideological, social, political and educational interests at work, some of which from time to time surface in response to particular issues raised by the governing body or school. Unlike some commentators (Sallis 1991) ,we see governing schools as a political activity, which involves decision making or its absence, questions about the values and purposes of schooling and the exercise of power over educational resources and choices. Although we do not completely rule out the idea of a partnership in which teachers heads and governors work harmoniously together, the political climate in which English education currently exists and the constant invoking of notions of consumer and parent power, seem largely to rule this out, although in some small village primary schools such an approach is possible. In general we feel our data support the view that consensus is most likely in situations where big issues are not at stake, all participants share similar values and class positions and ethnic group membership and where governors acknowledge the limitations of their power and knowledge.

We are anxious not to leave our analysis of micropolitics at the micro and intermediate meso level, but to link this to the macro level, since the governors we are studying are deeply aware of the national context and extensive media coverage of the so-called crisis in state education in England and Wales at the present time. Indeed as we have already shown elsewhere, the media images and presentation of schools are often invoked by governors, some of whom appear to care more about the exam results of their schools than they do about any other issue (Brehony and Deem 1991)

There is also a big theoretical question about the organisational autonomy of governing bodies in the present conjuncture. Some previous approaches to the study of governing bodies (Kogan et al 1984, Glatter

1989) have assumed that governing bodies do not constitute organisations in their own right. In the past this view seems to have been well founded as governors were very dependent on factors like the ethos of the school as well as the political complexion and policies of the LEA and also often met as a body only once a term. However in our own study, formal meetings of almost all governing bodies take place at least twice a term and the introduction of sub-committees also means that some governors meet more frequently; similar findings emerge in other studies (Keys and Fernandes 1990; Baginsky et al 1991). Gradually governing bodies are coming to develop an organisational culture of their own.

Although governing body organisational culture is not always easily discernible, for some headteachers, including those new to the job and those with a great deal of experience gained in different schools, such cultural characteristics are very noticeable. A new head at Ivydene Secondary said in interview; 'my first impression of this governing body was a kind of strangeness - sitting back in fairly comfortable chairs, not a great deal of paper, not as much going on as I'd anticipated'. A very experienced head at Birchdene, a primary school with a large Asian pupil intake and a governing body which, unusually, has a considerable number of Asian governors, said many school decisions now took a long time because governors wanted to be involved in everything. She explained this partly in terms of the new legislation but also in terms of the ethnic culture and composition, as well as previous experiences in the community, of the governing body itself 'Some of the Asian governors feel that decisions are made in a caucus they don't know about and they think we (i.e. the school) are trying to make decisions without them ... I do at times find it very difficult'. Furthermore, each governing body differs from others in the way it conducts meetings, mood and ambience,

the arrangement and type of seating, extent of member participation and philosophical outlook (Deem, Brehony and Hemmings 1991).

So it appears that distinct organisational cultures are being created in some governing bodies, which can help to separate them from their schools. However, despite this, there are still governing bodies who are less culturally distinct and continue to reflect the values of their respective schools, especially those in the more middle class areas. Distinct organisational cultures, by contrast, are usually shaped largely by factors external to the school itself. Thus at Birchdene Primary, ethnic minority politics and issues in the community surrounding the school, are a major influence on the governing body's cultural characteristics. But is it theoretically wise to conceptualise governing bodies as autonomous or semi-autonomous organisations? Our evidence suggests that this is now justified. Organisations have goals, they have a membership and they have technologies for achieving their aims (Westoby 1988). All of these characteristics apply, in some measure, to governing bodies.

We think it is helpful therefore, in considering both the governing body's mode of operation itself and the nature of the relationship between governing body and school, to introduce Weick's (1988) notion of loosely coupled systems. Weick describes the effects and appearance of this in the following terms: 'coupled events are responsive but... each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness. ...Loose coupling also carries connotations of impermanence, dissolvability and tacitness, all of which are potentially crucial properties of the glue which holds organisations together' (Weick 1988, pp 58-9). All these characteristics seem applicable to governing bodies. Governors serving a four year term, and some are even more temporary than that(Fernandes and Keys 1990). Governors often

lack knowledge about the school curriculum and teaching (Brehony and Deem 1991) and can be seen on occasions to act in ways which are separate from, though related to the school. Furthermore, as volunteers, governors and their schools are only very loosely bound together. So perhaps we should not be surprised if governors take up the role of the watchful and critical consumer (though children and young people are the real consumers of education) rather than that of supportive partner.

Governing schools in England 1944 - 1992

Although the concept of a school governor or manager has existed since the nineteenth century in England, and was espoused in the 1944 Education Act which provided secondary education for all, for many years governors were very minor players in a much larger game. Indeed in some LEAs before the 1980 Act, it was not unusual to find that a small number of governing bodies, numerically and politically dominated by LEA representatives, sufficed for all the schools in that area. Now although schools on the same site may share a governing body, most schools have their own. Until after the 1980 Education Act it was not obligatory for governing bodies to include parents, although many Local Education Authorities did permit parent governors, and some, like Sheffield, had experimented with local school democracy in the nineteen seventies (Bacon 1978).

In 1977 the Taylor Report (DES/Welsh Office 1977) suggested that whilst LEAs should remain responsible for the overseeing of school governance, much more power than previously should be delegated to governing bodies. These bodies should comprise equal numbers of LEA, staff, parent, pupil (where appropriate) and community representatives, with each school having its own governing body. Many of the Taylor Report's recommendations have subsequently been implemented, although this does not include pupil governors or the idea of numerical balance

between different groups. Also significant here is that Taylor talked of establishing a partnership between governors and schools; this notion implies a relationship, if not of complete equality, then at least one in which power is finely balanced. It is our contention that such partnership does not currently exist.

The 1986 Education Act altered the composition of governing bodies in maintained schools and clarified and extended the powers of governors. Using a formula related to school size, the numbers of elected parent and nominated co-opted governors were increased, whilst the number of LEA nominated governors were reduced. These provisions took effect in the autumn term of 1988. The Act specified more clearly than did the 1944 Act, the involvement of governors in curriculum; for example they were, in conjunction with their headteacher and paying due regard to LEA curriculum policies, to establish a secular curriculum policy for their school, including sex education if considered appropriate. Governing bodies were also to undertake the task of ensuring that the curriculum was free from political bias. Governors were to have a clear role in headteacher appointments; previously in some LEAs governors were not formally involved in shortlisting and sometimes not in interviewing of applicants either. Each year governing bodies were to prepare a written report for parents, which would then be discussed at an Annual meeting held at the school.

The 1988 Reform Act further extended the powers of governors. Governing bodies were asked to oversee the implementation of the newly introduced National Curriculum and required to establish a charging policy for 'optional extras'. Governors became responsible for ensuring the law on religious education and collective worship was observed and were required to deal with parental complaints about these and National Curriculum matters. Appeals against permanent exclusion of a child

from school were to be dealt with by a panel of governors. The use of school premises outside normal school hours was to be under the control of governing bodies. If, when operating under open enrolment, the school became oversubscribed, governors would decide which applicants to admit. In LEA schools the greatest increase in governor responsibilities occurred under the provisions for Local Management of Schools (LMS), under the provisions of which governors took on the task of approving school budgets, responsibilities for the appointment and dismisssal of teachers whilst ensuring compliance with employment law, and were expected to establish disciplinary and grievance procedures for staff. However, despite all these responsibilities, governing bodies in LEA schools have not, under LMS, become the employers of their staff. But the 1988 Act made this possible in some situations.

Governing bodies were also given the power under the 1988 Education Reform Act to initiate the process by which a school can opt out of local authority control and become directly funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES). The procedure, which has so far produced 220 Grant Maintained schools, a tiny proportion of the primary and secondary schools technically allowed to initiate GM proceedings, also involves a parental ballot. The intention was to allow schools which were opposed to the policies of left wing councils to remove themselves from those LEAs; in fact GMS has not always been used in this way and more schools have opted out of Conservative LEAs than Labour LEAs (Deem and Davies 1991). Where the outcome of GMS parental ballots and the subsequent decision by the Secretary of State for Education are favourable to the change, schools are given Grant Maintained status (GMS). In GMS schools governors become the freeholders of the school premises and land and directly employ the staff, so their powers are, in theory, even greater than those of

governors in LEA schools; there is also some limited research evidence that indicates a substantive difference in the way GMS governing bodies organize their activities (Bush 1990). However, our research on the ways in which LEA governing bodies are organised, when compared to the organisation of the governing body at one very large GM school, suggests that some of supposed differences between the governing bodies of GM schools and those in LEA schools are not an essential part of the shift to GM status (Deem and Wilkins 1992). Nevertheless it is the case that no LEA or its officers stand between GM schools and their source of funds, the DES. Only the Secretary of State can intervene in any dispute.

This has been a very abbreviated sketch of the changes that have taken place in the governing of schools during the last fifty years. What, though, are the consequences of these changes for the relationship between heads and their governors?

Do headteachers manage governors or do governors manage headteachers?

This issue is a very contentious one in England during the early nineteen nineties. Great play of the supposed power of governors in GM schools and LEA schools has been made by teacher and headteacher associations. Early in 1992, David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Headteachers, reported that the number of complaints from headteachers about interference in the day to day running of schools was rising. Hart said to a journalist recently, 'The Government has raised governors' expectations by telling them they have increased powers, but it has failed to clarify where those powers end' (Pilkington 1992). Disputes over where governors' power ends and that of heads begins seem to be a feature of many LEA and GM schools in England and Wales at the current time. Heads tend to see the division between governing body responsibilities and their own as a straightforward one - governors make

policy, heads implement it and undertake the day to day running of the school. Wilkins, a comprehensive school head, expresses the distinction thus; governing is' the establishment of policy and the monitoring and evaluation of that policy, and managing is 'translating broad policy into practice and maintaining appropriate structures and processes to ensure that policy objectives are achieved' (Wilkins 1990). In theory this is a rational division of labour; in practice however, it is not always so straightforward.

All of the heads in our study claimed, in interview, in varying ways, that they managed their governors as well as the school; this was seen as an intentional strategy. Governors, on the other hand, may see things rather differently and may have their own strategies for managing heads as well as schools. These strategies and the beliefs which accompany them, do not always pay much heed to the educational context in which governors find themselves. Thus a governor at one of our case study schools, Firdene Secondary, designed his own grievance procedure for teachers, which drew on his industrial experience but paid little heed to the prevailing nationally agreed working conditions of teachers. At Oakdene a governor using his home computer devised, and held the only disc copies of, the school's budget. No-one asked what would happen if he resigned. At Cotswold Secondary, a co-opted dentist, asked his opinion about an LEA agreed and union negotiated pay rise for secretarial and clerical staff, questioned whether the staff concerned had requested such an increase. On being told they had not, he retorted that in that case they were perfectly well paid already and should not be given the salary increase. At Knighton Primary two LEA governors felt they had the right to inspect (sic) the teaching in the school by visiting classes and then presenting their criticisms in a report to the governors, without first talking to the teachers whose classes they had visited.

The belief that governing bodies now wield power over heads and schools is particularly strongly held in some governor pressure groups. Thus, Walter Ulrich, a former senior DES civil servant, and now active in the National Association of Governors and Managers, expresses a clear perception that governors are in control, when he says ' Heads may not like the fact that their powers have been curtailed but that is the way it is' (quoted by Rafferty 1992). However, governors are not necessarily equally effective in controlling all aspects of a school's operation; for instance a recent study of how well governing bodies were working found that governors often felt diffident about intervening in curriculum issues (Baginsky, Baker and Cleave 1991). Most of the governing bodies in our study also exhibit such diffidence; indeed for many, teaching, the curriculum and children's learning are no-go areas in which few lay governors possess relevant expertise. (Brehony and Deem, 1991). So both headteachers and governors have set out their claims to power. Where does this leave the question of partnership between the two?

Partnership between governing bodies and schools

The only recent research on this apart from our own is a study conducted in 1990 under the auspices of the National Foundation for Educational Research (Baginsky, Baker and Cleave 1991). This project, based on a questionnaire to 258 governors and brief case studies of nine school governing bodies including interviews and observation, of meetings, does not define what is meant by 'effective partnership' though they do suggest that it goes beyond mere 'co-operation'. Working together is one aspect however, plus perhaps the further addition that 'The governing body has to function as a whole with members who are able to contribute'. Baginsky et al 1991, p. 116). The authors also hold the view that governors need to understand the implications of decisions they make and that governing bodies' field of operation must include the

curriculum as well as finance, law and buildings. This is the closest the study comes to a definition, having noted earlier that one in three governors interviewed saw their new role as one in which the governing body acted as a board of directors, with the head as chief executive. Other governors interviewed apparently still saw their role as essentially a supporting one. The NFER researchers found that 'Many governors in the study were reluctant to challenge professionals on educational issues ... On the rare occasions where comments or queries appeared to question aspects of the curriculum in the school, headteachers and sometimes the teacher governors tended to become defensive ... Only two headteachers [out of nine] believed the governors took an active role in decision making' (Baginsky, Baker and Cleave 1991, p. 115). The only examples of efficiency given in this study are of sub-groups of governors, sometimes also including teachers, who provide useful information and briefing to the main governing body on issues like buildings. There is not much sign of a whole governing body partnership here, in the terms laid out by the investigators.

Nor is there any more indication, in our own findings, of partnerships between governing bodies as a whole and their schools, or even between large sub-groups of governors and school staff. Indeed our research, both at the level of observation and in interviews, suggests strongly that governors divide into two groups - a small active core and a much larger, inactive, periphery. Many of our governors do not visit their schools regularly and three and a half years into their term of office we find there are still governing bodies where not every member knows every other governor's name. Perhaps the concept of partnership between governing bodies and schools is no longer as appropriate as in the days of the Taylor report (1977), when the functions of governors were rather more limited. Introducing the concept of lay governors as

consumers, or of governing bodies as Boards of Directors implies a much more hierarchical relationship between the school and governors. This has been further complicated since the introduction of LMS as governors have acquired many more powers over resources and personnel.

The increasing responsibilities of governing bodies for school personnel and teacher pay have been especially important in reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between schools and governing bodies. Following teacher industrial action in 1986 and 1987, the 1987 Teachers Pay and Conditions Act introduced the idea of directed time for teachers (1275 hours) and abandoned the Burnham collective bargaining machinery for teacher pay and conditions. Since then, an Interim Advisory Committee and now a Teachers Pay Review Body, have produced reports and recommendations on teachers pay. There has since the mid eighties been a clear ideological shift in the way teacher pay is regarded, with endeavours by politicians to end national pay and conditions of service and discretion being given to governing bodies over extensions of the basic pay scales, interim payments and the pay of heads and deputies. Governors may also be given a definite role in newly introduced teacher appraisal. It is harder, though clearly not impossible, for governing bodies to work in partnership with heads and schools when the former are acting as though they were employers, whilst simultaneously also acting as a conduit for policing government reforms in relation to National Curriculum and testing of pupils. A notion of partnership , implies some degree of similarity in status and collective effort on behalf of both partners. This is increasingly absent in many schools.

The notion of corporate responsibility of governing bodies is also interesting in relation to questions about partnership. Though in law, individual governors have no power, in practice this is not always the case. Thus, our data indicate that in most of our governing bodies, the

proceedings in formal meetings are dominated by two people, the head and the chair. In our interviews with heads, it is very evident that most, but not all of them, rely heavily on the capacity of their chairs to provide moral support, an outside perspective and as one primary head at Lady Clare said, 'sound common sense'. This is usually a mutual relationship; chairs rely on heads to tell them what is happening in the school and are often more than willing to act as confidants.

Other governors whom heads regard as important tend to fall into two categories, which are mediated by gender as well as by other considerations. The first covers those who come into school regularly, often women who may play little part in formal meetings (Deem 1989, 1991). Thus, the head of Lady Clare primary spoke warmly of a governor who 'speaks Urdu and she's a great help with both children and their parents' and the head of Moatmeadow talked about a female parent governor who had joined in a week's outdoor education course with sixth formers, saying 'She's super'. The second category includes those who have some special, usually non-educational expertise, to offer, including knowledge about building maintenance, health and safety or business finance. Although all of these can be controversial, buildings is something willingly delegated by some heads, especially where the issues are about crumbling classrooms and lack of repairs or maintenance. The head at Lady Clare Primary said wistfully ;' I would love the governors to take over responsibility for the maintenance of the buildings as it doesn't interest me at all'. Partnership does exist to a limited extent then and over certain issues or between particular categories of governor. But it does not seem to exist between schools and governing bodies as a whole, across the whole range of issues. Of course outside threat can produce unity and so can worries about reduced resources and inadequate budgets. On balance the issues which are least

likely to arouse conflict directed at the school or head, seem to be those which deal with things rather than people, and those which are least connected with education.

Conflictual relationships between heads and governors

Our research suggests that conflicts between heads and governors are particularly likely to erupt over educational issues such as exam results or teaching methods, and over personnel issues. The former often arise because of a clash in values and philosophy between heads and individual governors. The data we have indicates that membership of political parties, social class, individual experience of schooling and ethnicity are often key variables in disputes. Thus, in two schools in Northshire, an LEA itself divided on the merits and demerits of comprehensive schooling, a number of middle class, mostly male, Conservative governors, in the main educated outside the state system, and with business affiliations, have kept up a running battle for nearly three years over the level and acceptability of current exam results for secondary school students. This battle has been conducted in the press and on TV as well as in meetings, with governors in some cases publicly criticising the schools they govern and for which they are supposedly responsible.

At Birchdene Primary, a school with a high percentage of Asian pupils, there are a number of disputes with the white, female headteacher and those governors who are both male and Asian men. One of the most contentious issues has been over mother tongue teaching, which the Asian governors feel is inappropriate,if children are, in time, to meet the needs of employers. There have been demands by governors to see the all the head's correspondence, to have reading and other test scores for all children instantly and many concerns have been expressed about the predominance of white teachers in the school. The governing body is often in a state of turmoil at its meetings and is currently in the process

of selecting a new head. The current head says of her governors: 'Some of the Asian governors feel that decisions are made in a caucus they don't know about and they think we (i.e. the school) are trying to make decisions without them ... I do at times find it very difficult'. An interview with the Chair of governors at Birchdene reveals that fears of racial discrimination and prejudice are indeed at the bottom of the way in which governors act. The Asian perception and experience in that particular area is of being systematically discriminated against on grounds of "race" and being excluded from many decisions in public fora; school governing bodies are seen as yet another possible arena for that discrimination and exclusion. Yet even at Birchdene the opposition to the head and the school's values and philosophy is contradictory; when faced with fixing the head's salary, the governors after arguing for some time, conceded that they did not know enough about it and paid her at the salary level she requested

Conflicts between heads and schools are very much in the news in England at the moment. It is impossible to know to what extent these conflicts are being exacerbated by the 1980s legislation, though it is undoubtedly the case that the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts have given governors new and legally ambiguous powers over schools. However the legislation itself can distract attention from the real reasons underlying disputes. Thus, as mentioned earlier, GMS school governing bodies are sometimes perceived as being very different animals as compared with their LEA counterparts, with some people seeing GM schools as having unlimited power. There is also a rather inaccurate view, based on the conditions under which governing bodies used to operate prior to LMS, that in LEA schools LEA officers can step in and mediate any disputes between governors and heads (Macleod and Judd 1992), whereas in GM schools only the Secretary of State can do so. This view is not factually

inaccurate but it assumes a Kogan like view of governing bodies as shaped by their schools and LEAs (Kogan et al 1984). We have argued that this situation is changing as governing bodies develop their own organisational cultures and become more loosely coupled to their schools. Furthermore. with local financial management, LEAs are taking a less prominent role in schools, their officers often lack expertise in implementing LMS in schools and have lost staff as a consequence of the transfers of funding to schools. LEAs are no longer able to maintain, even if they wish, a 'hands on' approach to their governing bodies and many have lost touch with developments as standard agendas, LEA briefing papers and LEA clerks disappear, or are rejected. This is abundantly clear in Northshire, the LEA in our study which prior to LMS kept a close eye over its governing bodies and their activities.

The confusion over what or whom is responsible for conflicts is shown in the press coverage in early 1992, of a *cause celebre* concerning stormy relationships between governors and a headteacher in a London GMS school, Stratford School in Newham, London. Such cases have, of course, occurred before and a famous incident occurred at William Tyndale School in the mid nineteen seventies between the head, the lay managers and parents over the use of certain teaching methods, with the head losing his job as a result (ILEA 1976). Tyndale is widely believed to have given rise to a wave of concern about the mechanisms of school accountability to governors and parents (Dale 1981).

At Stratford Secondary School in London, where 75% of the students and most of the governors but only 11% of teachers, are Asian, the current crisis seems to centre around a dispute between the white female headteacher Anne Snelling, the chair of governors, a male Asian Muslim parent called Ghulam Shaida (formerly a teacher) and a male Asian Sikh maths teacher and local councillor, Harbajhan Singh. The

school applied for permission to opt out of LEA control in 1990 after an attempt by Newham LEA to close it because of falling roles. Stratford became a GMS school in April 1991. Anne Snelling was appointed just before this; Harbajhan Singh had also been an applicant for the post and in a row over the outcome of the appointment, the previous chair of governors, a white vicar called Gerry Reilly, was replaced by Ghulam Shaida. In 1992 the governing body suspended the head for 'gross professional misconduct', only to see her reinstated by the Secretary of State for Education There have, according to the press, been many other allegations and accusations by the three main actors. The former chair of governors says that these arise because 'these governors want to run the school day to day' One source of contention between the head and the current chair of governors has apparently arisen over the latter's 'continual use of the bursar's office' (Macleod and Judd 1992, p. 17). The Secretary of State has added two personal nominees to the governing body but the rows are continuing.

Most of the press discussion about the Stratford incident assumes that GMS status, giving employer status to governors, and excessive use of parent power, is at the root of the problem. However this school, although at a very acute stage of conflictual relations between head and governors, displays many similar features to Birchdene in our study. A major source of conflict is over issues to do with 'race' and ethnicity, not GM status. If largely Asian or black schools have a predominantly white teaching staff, whatever the practices and beliefs of that staff, and whatever the formal powers of the governors, conflicts are likely to arise, given a society which has a high degree of racism.(Deem 1989). Thus it may be that the cause of conflicts between heads and governors is more complex than a simple analysis based on legislative changes allows.

Conclusion

In this paper we have examined the developing nature of the relationship between lay school governors and education professionals, especially headteachers, in the context of extensive reforms of the English and Welsh education system during the late nineteen eighties. We have argued that with moves to greater financial and other forms of school level autonomy, neither governors nor schools are as easily monitored by local education authorities as before the mid nineteen eighties. The micropolitical nature of governing schools and the emerging and identifiable organisational cultures of governing bodies, which are now more loosely coupled to schools than ever before, when added to the many new responsibilities of governors, do not make for a consensual relationship in many cases. Heads and governors tend to have differing views about who holds power and what should be the role of each party in running the school; this is compounded by the complex nature and ambiguity of the education reform legislation. Yet we should be careful not to attach too much importance to the reforms themselves, important though they are. Cultural factors, including social class, 'race' and gender, are still crucial to an understanding of how and why governors and heads sometimes come into conflict with each other.

The ideological tenor of the recent English educational reforms very much assumes that consumers of education, whether parents, governors or employers, now have the capacity to challenge the power of professional educators. But decision making power, over and within schools, is not just a matter of attending meetings and expressing opinions, however well or badly founded these may be. It is also necessary for governors to understand what schools are about and to play a part in their major activities and processes, whether it be curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment, maintenance of buildings, or recruitment

and retention of teaching staff. Such responsibilities may not be easily exercised by those who regard the task as not serious because it is unpaid, those with no longstanding commitment to a given school, those who visit their schools infrequently or who lack relevant expertise, and those who have not taken the trouble to understand that schools and businesses are not identical in all their aspects. Furthermore, a more fundamental question remains; although community participation and involvement in schools is certainly desirable in a democracy, does this necessarily extend to non-professionals taking a key role in educational decision-making and policy formulation? If it does, then perhaps we need to ask ourselves whether and why we still need teachers and heads at all?

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